

TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL PLAN

**2002-2003
PRODUCT PRIORITIES**



November, 2001

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Background

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The Product Development Plan serves as a base for the Tourism Partnership Council to formulate an annual strategic action plan clearly identifying priorities for product development. In addition, it will lead to the adoption of long-term objectives and strategies to help maximize tourism benefits and competitively position Nova Scotia in the world marketplace. Created under the auspices of the TPC's Product Development Committee, its mandate is to substantially increase Nova Scotia tourism revenue by encouraging the growth, quality, competitiveness and sustainability of product development in Nova Scotia's tourism sector.

The Product Development Plan was a province-wide initiative, which recognized the many stakeholders involved in product development, such as tourism industry members, regional tourism industry associations, regional development authorities, provincial and federal governments, municipalities and community groups. Although the plan is very broad, not all of the initiatives discussed will be implemented in the short term. With input from various stakeholders and discussion forums throughout Nova Scotia, the Tourism Partnership Council's, Product Development Committee has identified strategic objectives for the next three to five years for implementation. Recognizing there is not one group or organization responsible for all product development efforts, this plan is designed to collectively work towards common goals.

It is important to note that this plan is based on the Tourism Product-Market Match Study, the specific objective of which was to assess Nova Scotia's tourism products by consolidating existing market and product research, providing a basis for scoring and ranking tourism products on both product and market criteria. In addition to this assessment and research consolidation, the process identified information and research gaps, emerging products for future development consideration in Nova Scotia, and key infrastructure needs as well as the most pressing product development needs within each product category. The Product-Market Match Model created as part of this study provides a tool which will assist in preparing product development strategies and setting priorities. The Model is designed to be updated as new market data and insights become available and also to be fine-tuned to reflect different priorities.

For the first year of development three priority experience areas have been identified; the authentic seacoast experience, the culture & heritage experience and the outdoor/nature experience. While "Quality" and "Build a 12-Month Season" are two of the overall strategic objectives in the Tourism Strategy, it was decided that seasonal and quality issues need to be integrated throughout all the priorities rather than highlighting them as specific priority areas. To grow the tourism industry, the shoulder and winter seasons need to be developed and enhanced. Under these two seasons a number of development opportunities exist and have the

potential of increasing overall visitation, length of stay and tourism revenues. Likewise quality will be a part of every initiative we undertake.

In addition to the three priority experience areas being used to establish year one actions for the development plan, there are a number of product enhancers or other priority actions that don't necessarily fit within the three stated priority experiences. These training, influencing and advocacy actions clearly run through the entire plan and are critical to achieving the objectives of the Product Development Plan and the overall objectives of the Tourism Strategy. For the initial year of 2002, an action plan has been created for each priority by identifying specific initiatives for implementation, potential partners, timing, status and measurement. The priorities outlined will not remain constant. An annual review and evaluation of the action plan will be completed to determine the priorities for subsequent years and encourage stakeholders to identify opportunities, take a lead role and implement specific actions. This will ensure the tourism industry as a whole will have the opportunity to work together toward its common goals.

The Tourism Partnership Council cannot implement this plan alone – it is imperative that our industry stakeholders support the plan by becoming involved and identifying the initiatives they will focus on implementing.

The following actions have been identified as priorities for year one. They were identified from the overall development plan's lists of actions and are seen to be reasonable and possible to undertake and complete during the 2002/2003 fiscal year.

A. AUTHENTIC SEACOAST EXPERIENCE

Nova Scotia is Canada's foremost seacoast vacation destination that offers our visitors an authentic and memorable experience. With over 7400 kilometers of coastline, at no point are you more than 56 kilometers from the sea. It is the sea that influences who we are and how we live. Only Nova Scotia uniquely combines spectacular coastline and scenery, maritime culture and hospitality, an array of attractions and living traditions that help shape us into a tourism destination like no other.

1. Develop attractions and activities which focus on history/heritage and seacoast themes:
 - Re-establish the Bluenose II as a provincial tourism icon.
2. Enhance the seacoast experience by further developing natural sites, attractions and activities:
 - Continue to support Product Club Programs, ie Bay of Fundy and Atlantic Lighthouse Council
 - Enhance Bay of Fundy product mix by implementing initiatives identified in the Fundy Development Plan
 - Develop and enhance our coastal hiking/walking trails
 - Develop increased coastal access and preservation of the marine environment, lighthouses and beaches

3. Improve customer service and the quality of Nova Scotia product destinations, operations and communities:
 - Design and implement market-readiness enhancement programs.
 - Identify and develop "Best Business Practice" opportunities.
 - Support operators to attend "Best Business Practice" initiatives.
 - Identify and support coastal communities for participation in a Sustainable Communities Program.
4. Establish policy task forces to examine issues:
 - Coastal access
 - Peggy's Cove Capacity
5. Evaluate the existing travelway and scenic drives system throughout Nova Scotia from a visitors' perspective, and how it impacts/enhances the coastal experience.

B. CULTURE AND HERITAGE EXPERIENCE

A number of opportunities were identified based on the culture and heritage for which Nova Scotia is best known. Nova Scotia is steeped in culture and it's four hundred-year history, with its numerous settlers from varied backgrounds have given us unlimited possibilities. Nova Scotia offers exciting and engaging history, from prehistoric fossils to our diverse cultural heritage to the natural wonders of our land and sea. Culture addresses the beliefs, customs, arts and institutions of a society at a given time and heritage deals with culture as it is passed down from generation to generation.

1. Improve the physical quality and expand seasonal opportunities of existing attractions:
 - Develop programming, demonstrations, participatory experiences, and increase educational and interpretive opportunities that will expand the season.
 - Implement a "living history" program at historic sites, museums, communities which bring alive its historical seacoast significance
 - Create new strategic product mixes (eg. theatre in museums, artistic activities in natural settings)
2. Work with the Acadian community to establish priorities for development and marketing:
 - Clarify roles and mandates of the various organizations.
 - Develop and prioritize programming, demonstrations, participatory experiences and increase educational and interpretive opportunities.
 - Continue to support the Acadian Tourism Product Club under the brand of L'Acadie.
 - Work with Acadie 2003-2005 Committee to ensure planned activities are market ready.
3. Identify and develop products for extended season.

4. Identify and develop new and emerging niche product strategies for Cuisine and Wine.
5. Improve the tourism working relationship with cultural and heritage communities.

C. OUTDOOR NATURE EXPERIENCE

Nature lovers enjoy the beauty and variety of Nova Scotia's outdoor experiences. From the scenic views of the Cabot Trail to the hiking trails of Cape Chignecto to wilderness camping in Kejimikujik National Park, Nova Scotia offers something for everyone. Our outdoor product is a vital part of how we position ourselves in the global market.

1. Enhance the outdoor nature experience by further developing natural sites, attractions and activities.
 - Develop and enhance birdwatching opportunities
2. Establish a policy task force to examine the natural resource management issue (eg. Clear cutting, integrated resource management)
3. Develop the province as a pre-eminent fall foliage touring destination.
4. Develop a viable niche product strategy for the outdoor nature product.

D. PRODUCT ENHANCERS

In addition to the three priority experience areas being used to establish year one actions for the tourism development plan, there are a number of other priority actions that do not necessarily fit within these stated experiences. These training, influencing and advocacy actions clearly run through the entire plan and are critical to achieving and enhancing the objectives of the Product Development Plan and the overall objectives of the Tourism Strategy. In some cases, the following actions will be addressed by other Tourism Partnership Council committees or Task Forces or other tourism groups.

1. Improve visitor satisfaction.
 - Continue the delivery of service excellence programs (eg. SuperHost - English, French) for front line staff.
 - Develop an integrated Visitor Information Services Strategy which addresses all aspects of visitor information services from a customer and quality services perspective.
 - Support the development of an implementation plan for the ACTP visitor satisfaction research project.
2. Extending lengths of stay by extending hours of operation and length of season at museums, parks, attractions, VIC's and businesses.

3. Implement a Nova Scotia "Trade Smart" program to evaluate and certify tourism operators who conduct best business practices with the travel trade.
 - Develop training and mentoring programs focusing on market-readiness (eg Introductory "Marketing 101", Adventure Tourism, Community Tourism Planning).
4. Improve air access to Nova Scotia from our core and developing markets
5. Expand and promote Halifax International Airport as an international gateway to Canada.
6. Influence the federal government to change the transport policy to allow international air carriers to fly into Halifax.
7. Ensure accurate information for measuring tourism impact.
 - Collect and distribute, accurate and timely information on the economic impact and performance statistics.
 - Communicate the value of tourism to government, industry, the public, communities and municipal units.
8. Enforce standards of quality for tourism facilities (fixed-roof accommodations and campgrounds) in order to meet and exceed visitors expectations
9. Offer "Best Practices" seminars on how to use technology for improved guest relations, accounting and financing.

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